

BLM Study Review of Hells Canyon Complex Studies

A Preliminary Assessment of Bats Along Snake River, Hells Canyon National Recreation Area

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**Craig A. Johnson, Fisheries Biologist (Area Biologist)
Cottonwood Field Office
Cottonwood, Idaho**

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1. INTRODUCTION

The community of bats using the Snake River corridor comprises 13 to 15 species. The proposal to re-license three dams will have significant influence on this reach of the Snake River and will have varying effects on bats. This assessment documents the 15 species of bats known or suspected to occur within the Snake River corridor. A number of agencies and individuals have conducted investigations along this reach of the Snake River focusing on specific species and their habitats. This preliminary assessment has compiled pertinent information from these investigations.

2. CONCLUSIONS

Distribution of Townsend's big-eared bats, the spotted bat, the western pipistrelle, and the Yuma myotis appear to be significantly limited to the canyons of the Snake River, Imnaha River, and the Grande Ronde River. Thirteen species of bats (out of a possible 15) have been recorded using the canyon. Yuma myotis use of buildings and many mines is common in the area. Six colonies or collection sites for Townsend's big-eared bat and many satellite sites have been documented. Within the assessment area at least 89 mapped sites have been recorded with bat use. Many of these sites have documented high use. Five centers of Townsend's big-eared maternity colony activity seem to be present with three actual maternity colony sites identified. Hells Canyon habitats and low levels of land disturbance may provide a high level of security for a bat fauna that may be near historic or pre-historic levels in terms of numbers and complexity.

Human activities and bat encounters will result in varying levels of disturbance to habitats (e.g., buildings, caves) and injury/mortality.

3. STUDY ADEQUACY

The study is a "preliminary assessment" and compilation of other investigations. Consequently, additional specifics of bat occurrences and ecology may be obtained from referenced studies and surveys. This assessment does not completely address project impacts and development of Protection, Maintenance, and Enhancement measures.

4. BLM CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSIONS

This preliminary assessment provides a good compilation of bat studies and investigations (e.g., good reference source). The Hells Canyon area provides high quality habitat that may be near pristine conditions because of limited land disturbing impacts. However, some concern for human disturbance has been identified (e.g., cave disturbance, human caused mortality/injury, etc.).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Need to further summarize existing studies in regards to potential effects from re-licensing of three dams. Additional studies in regards to human uses and disturbances (e.g., recreational) may be warranted for bats in the assessment area.